News from the Wyoming Department of Health and the Wyoming Livestock Board

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State Issues New Rabies Rules

CHEYENNE - Officials from the Wyoming Department of Health and the Wyoming Livestock Board say new state rabies rules are designed to help protect humans bitten by unvaccinated animals and to encourage pet owners to have their animals vaccinated against rabies.

The new Wyoming Livestock Board rules require any unvaccinated dog, cat or ferret that bites a person to be euthanized for immediate rabies testing. In addition, unvaccinated animals potentially exposed to the rabies virus must also be euthanized immediately.

"Too many unvaccinated animals bite humans, especially children, in Wyoming every year," said Dr. Jamie Snow, state public health veterinarian with the Department of Health. "When that happens, the possibility of rabies is a concern."

According to the Wyoming Department of Health, rabies is a preventable viral disease of mammals most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. Once clinical illness from rabies develops, it is almost always fatal. About one to four human deaths associated with rabies occur in the United States every year.

Individuals bitten by unvaccinated animals are forced to wait the 10-day animal quarantine period before they can be assured the animal did not have rabies. "In many instances this causes undue stress to victims and their families and results in people needlessly receiving painful post-exposure human rabies vaccinations," Snow said. The cost of rabies prevention is \$1,500 to \$3,000 per person and consists of five vaccinations spread out through a 28-day period.

"People really need to vaccinate their pets against rabies in Wyoming," said Dr. Walt Cook, assistant state veterinarian with the Wyoming Livestock Board. "We plan on enforcing our new rules to get people to do just that."

If you have additional questions about rabies or would like more details about the rules, please contact the Wyoming Department of Health at 1-877-996-9000 or the Wyoming Livestock Board at 307-777-6443.

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